

Mitzi Pederson

NICOLE KLAGSBRUN GALLERY

When dealing in understatement, it pays to have the courage of one's convictions. Cramming an exhibition space with variations on a less-is-more theme can risk displacing the subtlety of such an artistic project by imparting to the work a possibly misleading but often indelible appearance of slightness. Showing ten works of this kind when two would do might be a symptom of creative insecurity or of our recessionary times. Berlin-based sculptor Mitzi Pederson has a reputation for taking the specifics of gallery architecture into account, so it was surprising to see her succumb to this particular temptation in her recent exhibition, "You'll Know." The show—Pederson's second solo appearance at Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery—saw her slightly undermining a gentle formalist project by giving us rather more than enough.

What Pederson filled the gallery with on this occasion was mostly wood, slender dowels or delicate slivers of plywood, arranged into simple lattices held together with lengths of colored thread or yarn (all works *Untitled*, 2010). Some of these structures, which suggest homemade television antennae, are mounted on rough-cut wooden blocks and stand upright on the floor. Others project, without visible means of support, from the gallery walls. Some boast surfaces coated roughly with black glitter, and in a few the wood breaks selectively and quietly into muted color—here a dowel with an olive-green-painted end, there a base stained a dirty gray on one side. Color comes too from the red and blue yarn that is knotted around the sculptures' joints and stretched taut between them. Taking a lead from Fred Sandback, Pederson uses the wool as a graphic element as well as a structural one. The material's distinctive fuzziness also introduces something of a painterly quality, its color seeming to bleed onto the walls and into the surrounding air like watercolor into paper.

While Pederson makes frequent use of physical tension in these works, she leaves aside the theatrics of gravity and balance that numerous artists from Richard Serra to Fischli & Weiss (think of the duo's 1984–86 "Equilibres" series) have exploited. What is important here is not the anticipation that a thread might snap at any moment,

View of "Mitzi Pederson," 2010.



catapulting a precarious arrangement across the room, but that the shapes made by the conjoining of elements are somehow compelling in themselves. The aim here is surely simplicity over tricksiness, not cleverness but a kind of artless grace. This requires a sympathetic viewer—the works meet us halfway but no more than that—but at its best, it obviates the need for explanatory backstories, or indeed for words of any kind. These are objects that function in relation to their immediate environment but that may also, given space, hold their own.

In addition to the wood-and-yarn sculptures that made up the bulk of "You'll Know," Pederson also showed four rather different works. The first, which was mounted on the wall at the show's entrance, consisted of an irregular scrap of black velvet wrapped around a small slab of brown felt, strips of silver paper suggesting a loose armature. The second, composed of eighteen small, flat, shardlike pieces of pale wood, their edges darkened with colored pencil, was scattered beneath one of the room's large cylindrical columns. The third, a cluster of fourteen diminutive unframed collages in which dark photocopies and scraps of silver paper predominate, occupied a good part of a far corner. The fourth was a delicate wall-mounted assemblage of thread and yarn. Taken together, the four works suggest a panoply of influences, from Richard Tuttle to Gedi Sibony, and demonstrate that their maker is eminently capable of both variety and restraint.

—Michael Wilson